

A D D R E S S

TO THE

ROMAN CATHOLICS

OF

I R E L A N D,

RELATIVE TO THE

LATE PROCEEDINGS,

AND ON THE

MEANS AND PRACTICABILITY

OF A

TRANQUIL EMANCIPATION.

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D U B L I N :

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M D C C X C I I.

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A D D R E S S

TO THE

ROMAN CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

AS the Kingdom of God in morals, so is the right of suffrage in a representative constitution; that great essential good to which every other is subordinate. Let the Catholics of Ireland seek this in preference to all advantages. Let them seek it with temper, with perseverance, and with unanimity; if their success be not immediate, at least the period at which they must succeed, cannot be remote.

It is not the object of this Essay to suggest a change in the constitution of Ireland; we live under a wise and fortunate organization of Society. It does not recommend a novel project, such as might muse the speculative, or distract the industrious. The exclusion of the Irish Catholics from the right of voting for their representatives, is not sanctioned by the prescription of seventy years. He who proposes to restore a privilege, of which the exercise has been only suspended during that short period, cannot, with justice, be accused of innovation or experiment.

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Still less do I insinuate that violence ought to be employed, or is likely to prove efficacious. Few political benefits are of sufficient value to be purchased by commotion. I shall demonstrate hereafter, that nothing would be so likely to extinguish our hopes for ever, as the substitution of our natural strength, for our political influence.

There exists in our communion no inconsiderable stock both of talents and influence ; if we concentrate the latter, and bring the former to bear upon the question, we are supported by every principle of justice, and rule of policy ; it will not be possible to refuse us a participation in the advantages of rational liberty. But a complete co-operation is essential to our success. If there should ever arise among us a ridiculous cabal of men, ambitious of rule without ability to regulate ; who, actuated by vanity and jealousy, will endeavour to estrange from our cause the men of rank of the party, its natural leaders ; and one after the other to disgust and disown the men of letters, its natural auxiliaries ; such persons may mean well, but their good intentions will only retard, not avert, what they will deserve, the execration of the body, whose cause they caricature, and whose interest they injure. I speak of what it may not be amiss to guard against. To sway in such a body, as the Catholics of Ireland, is no vulgar temptation ; but if any be deluded by this hope into the measures I have recited, they, and not the array of Squires who figure in Falkner's Journal, will be the formidable enemies of the Irish Catholics.

Far be it from me to suppose that the cause of a great people depends for success upon the interposition of any one, or any few individuals, be their situation ever so elevated. The magnitude of the Roman Catholic question must press itself forward in this Kingdom. But still the co-operation of the most eminent of our persuasion would be valuable. It were ridiculous to imagine that they do not earnestly desire the abolition of the laws, which proscribe their religion. I have no authority to assert, but I have good grounds to believe, that they would not be reluctant to engage in the constitutional pursuit of the privilege of suffrage. If they stand aloof in passive acquiescence, it is that the measures of our body appear to them to be conducted with a degree of superfluous bustle, of which the tendency is not easily discernable. It is the design of this publication to represent the practicability of a *tranquil emancipation*, and to interest in the support of it those who have hitherto appeared neuter.

Parliament is provided by the British constitution, as the natural resort of the subject, in which he shall expose his grievances and seek redress of them. An appeal to this tribunal bears no singularity on the face of it. If the law of the land interfered in any other manner with our happiness or property we should alike remonstrate. I do not see why the proceeding deserves to be more seriously considered than any other litigation in the ordinary courts of justice.

By the fundamental principles of the same constitution, the privilege of voting for Representa-

sentatives is a property, and accrues in consequence of the possession of a freehold, as naturally as the dominion over the timber, which the estate produces. If a capricious act of parliament prohibited any description of proprietors from cutting down the timber upon their estates, it could not be pronounced extraordinary by any reasonable man, that they should solicit a repeal of the statute, and support the suit with their united influence. The case before us is exactly parallel.

I enter into this definition of the claim of the Catholics, because in the arguments on either side it has often appeared to be confounded with numerical representation. It is immaterial to the present discussion whether that species of political institution be wise or vicious. It is not connected with the demand we make upon our country. The Catholics have never sought that the members of their body should be created electors by act of parliament, but that the capacity to become electors according to the ordinary forms of the constitution be restored to our persons; that the privilege of being represented be re-annexed to our freeholds. This pretension has been precisely expressed in the address of the Catholics of Waterford to the nation, a paper which has been generally well received by the members of our communion.

A question here challenges notice, which has been agitated among the Catholics themselves, and which furnishes a pretext of dissent to a small minority of Belfast. The town, most conspicuous in Ireland by the superior information, public spirit, and liberality

rality of its citizens, and elevated far indeed beyond my panegyric. The importance of the acquisition is urged to deter us from making the privilege of suffrage our immediate claim. We are advised to commence by these requisitions, which may be conceded with most facility, because upon these articles it is supposed that the spirit of Protestant opposition is less vehement. Whilst engaged in the pursuit of the greatest good, I should not absolutely reject a lesser. But as our condition can never be comfortable, until we shall be created citizens of the country, we ought to fix a steady eye upon this point, and direct thither the entire force of our expectations and activity.

I suppose that there is not in Ireland a Roman Catholic, who does not earnestly desire an equalization of franchises. It would have been at any time a despicable artifice to have dissembled that laudable and natural ambition: from the notoriety of our hopes, our sentiments, and our exertions, it would be at present impracticable. As the lesser concession is but a gradation to the greater, every man, who desires to oppose us, will, if we divide our question, make a stand at each article, and contest it with a degree of pertinacity not proportionate to the object itself, but to that more important concession, which is ultimately involved in it. If we solicit gradatim, we shall be liable at each step to the imputation of insatiability and ingratitude. Gentlemen have said last winter that they had never considered the question of suffrage: if it were permitted to lie dormant for a century, the same apology would be offered to posterity.

Until it be placed so fully before them, that they cannot turn aside from the discussion, it never will be in the contemplation of persons, who have no inducement to revolve the matter in their minds, and a great many reasons of interest not to comply with it.

I further object to this progressive requisition, because it must disgust every man of spirit; and whilst it alienates from us those, of whom the aid is most desirable, gives leisure, courage, and decision to our enemies. Whilst our demands are at the highest, our opponents will occasionally endeavour to compromise; let the smallest favour be the prayer of our petition—even that they will resist as innovation. I speak from experience. In 1792 we asked elective franchise, and obtained the law professions; in 1783 we entreated that Roman Catholics might be eligible to the six medical professorships then erected; the proposal was resisted with not less vehemence than if we demanded the Primacy for a Popish Patriarch. I observe also, that during the period of our most respectful acquiescence, not only we were not complimented, but new penalties were * enacted; I therefore conclude that we are considerable losers by our passive expectation.

The obstacle to our emancipation in this view is the prejudice of certain Protestants, and some wild, nonsensical theory which supposes

* The chief of these were the exclusion from the direction of the Bank, from the school of Physic, different clauses relative to the possession of fire arms, a privation of the right of voting at vestries, &c. &c. See the digest of the Popery laws said to have been prepared under the inspection of the Hon. Mr. Butler.

that

that we are not competent to enjoy the advantages of liberty; that it is criminal to be a Catholic, and dangerous to trust us. I will not descend to appropriate a line to the refutation of these absurdities; the authors and supporters of such rhapsody (at least such of them as are serious) deserve Bedlam. But nothing can be more preposterous than that we should so far comply with these silly chimeras, as by any means to include them in our consideration; by yielding for an instant we sanction the imputations, and suffer them to acquire vigour; as we tender our moral character in Society we should loudly assert that the proposition is universally false, and the prejudices universally groundless. If we curtail a single iota from our claim, it is an evidence that we do not think it just; if we omit any occasion of public and parliamentary discussion, it may be inferred that we are awed by conscience. Unless our adversaries were aware that the reason of our cause is irresistible, and that relief must follow close upon investigation, why should they endeavour by so much assiduity to divert, and by so many manœuvres to deter us, from submitting our claim to the legislature.

If we shall previously acquire the capacity to become electors, the removal of other disqualifications must ensue speedily, whereas to commence by the latter will rather obstruct us in the pursuit of the former.

There exists at present very few means of influencing Roman Catholics. When a proud or an active spirit arises in the party, his exertions are rather sharpened by the view of those advantages he is deprived of. All the descriptions

tions of corruption which, without offending delicacy, undermine virtue, are utterly impracticable ; let us be made eligible to the army, the revenue, and to situations of municipal importance ; it only turns upon our party the arts of political debauchery, and procures the means to take off our leaders. The man of weight will be complimented with a pair of colours for his son or brother, a place in some public office for a relation or dependant. It must be truly a coarse mind which will not reject plain money, but whilst obligations of this nature are conferred, many will not refuse to gratify their powerful friend, by endeavouring to repress the dissatisfaction of their brethren.

This species of progressive emancipation would not, as is supposed by the Protestant advocates for the experiment, prepare the Catholics for complete liberty. * Almost every restriction operates upon ranks utterly unconnected with each other. It must not be concluded that, because the Catholic gentry have been qualified, for five or more years, to receive the commission of the peace, a Catholic peasant will, at the expiration of that term, exercise more soundly his discretion as an elector. The same reasoning applies equally to another expedient which has been recommended, admitting at the outset freeholders of large property, suppose 100*£.* annually. As the opposition to the Catholics proceeds principally

* I comply with the common cant in arguing this matter, but if liberty means the exercise of franchise, it requires less discernment to chuse a member of parliament than to purchase a cow at a fair ; any man who has understanding sufficient to acquire a 10*£.* freehold, or to retain it, if acquired for him, is fully competent to vote at his county election.

from those, who have a private interest in abridging the number of electors, it will not appear difficult to account for this proposal; but I do not imagine a sensible administration will ever adopt it: it is not possible to devise any means more likely to produce mischief. A breach in the fortress, altho' calculated but for the admission of a few, would not less effectually betray its weakness than if it gave access to the entire people; in addition to their present discontents the excluded portion would become clamorous from jealousy, and they would be more untractable, as they might imagine themselves betrayed by their leaders, and the men of property would lose their influence. Altho' it be not immediately before us, I must observe here, that the qualification for franchise proposed last winter in some resolutions of the Catholic committee, and said to have been mentioned to the British ministers, was most judiciously selected, and proves that the persons, who undertook the management of this transaction, did not understand it. The freeholders of the counties of the towns of Cork, Dublin, Waterford, Limerick, Galway and Drogheda, a great part of the trading interest, were not comprised within the plan; and as the degree of relief proposed, was rather substantial, and included many, it would have been probably a work of time and trouble to repair the oversight; a convincing evidence that acts which may be supposed to emanate from the wishes of an entire people, and in which errors may be eternally conclusive, should be weighed

with more than the accustomed circumspection.

Franchise is, in this country, either personal as in boroughs, or accruing from the possession of freehold property. I exclude the former from my scheme of reasoning, because I do not think it enviable to be connected with them. The law which should authorize Catholic freeholders to vote at the election of representatives, would not convey the franchise itself, but the capacity to exercise it, when the qualification had been already procured by the ordinary means of acquisition. As from the rigour of the laws, the Catholics have been, until lately, prohibited to obtain that species of landed property, considered with relation to their numbers, they possess few freeholds. They only can acquire them from Protestants, who, it is presumed, will not alienate for the mere purpose of creating a Catholic influence; our admission to franchise must therefore be necessarily gradual, and the law, which should cancel the exclusion, cannot for a considerable period communicate any material degree of weight to the Catholics; it will merely operate as an act of humanity by abolishing the system of vexatious partiality, which grinds the poor, and as an act of national policy, by creating a substantial yeomanry in the Southern Provinces; unless the Protestants should alienate, and the Catholics acquire landed property in an over proportion, the same state of things must be eternal.

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I therefore insist that to restore the Catholics to the capacity for suffrage, and leave the acquisition of that suffrage to their industry, is no more than a gradual emancipation. That of all other modes this is most consonant to the idea of those, who desire to associate the Catholics from time to time into the constitution : for if the right of suffrage be withheld for fifty years, it will then be necessary to admit all, who during that space of time shall have acquired freeholds; whereas at present only a portion can be entitled to vote, and so progressively a new portion every general election.

Finally, that the project for removing the penalties against the Catholics from time to time, *& seriatim*, is not a scheme of progressive emancipation, but furnishes to ministers the means of jobbing with the Catholics, of retaining them in expectation, and consequently in dependance.

And certainly the opportunity will be improved to the public detriment; the minister who can attach three millions and an half to his person by an act of justice, which all Europe must applaud, may attempt any measure; he has only to conciliate the Catholics by concessions, which the Protestants deny, and thus secure impunity. The individual, in public life, may support that minister, be he ever so profligate; let him but reprobate the popery laws, the favor of the great body of his countrymen will compensate for the loss of popularity with the remainder.

The same interest, which prompts us to seek the removal of this disqualification, may produce in others a desire to continue it. They are authorized to resist our application, But as it is our duty to solicit, so is it theirs to oppose with decorum. I do not think that the Catholics have failed in moderation, but I consider their adversaries scandalously deficient. The proceedings on our part have been respectful, on theirs authoritative ; we have prayed for harmony, whilst they threatened confusion ; we have spoken of peace, whilst they vociferated bloodshed. I must repeat after the Roman Catholics of Waterford, that the propensity to sedition in this kingdom is among the ascendancy confederations of Dublin and the grand juries ; that if tumult be in agitation, those who threaten or forebode it must understand the means and have concerted the project. They alone are suspicious, they alone are guilty of indecent intimidation.

In pursuit of the great advantages we hold in view, no mean obstacles are to be surmounted. We must encounter a formidable array of passions, prejudices and interests. All those in every rank of life who have tasted the sweets of monopoly, and are desirous to protract the enjoyment. Every feeble mind, the prey of vulgar errors; every ungenerous wretch who delights in dominion. The whole tribe of pseudo philanthropists so common in Ireland, who, wrapt in the admiration of French or American liberty cannot spare a compassionate thought for their enslaved brethren. Who as dying misers

fers were wont to ransom their souls, think they have offered an adequate tribute of adoration to the God of freedom, and expiated the errors of their passions, by a superfluous sacrifice which no passion is concerned to prevent.

We are animated by the justice of our cause, that repugnance to submit to degradation, the growth of every noble mind. Our personal honor which is tarnished, whilst we suffer without complaint that the public records of our country pronounce us despicable or dangerous. Our individual happiness and the interest of those who shall succeed us.

Credite, qui nunc est, populum, populumque futurum,

*Permixtas afferre preces, hæc libera nasci,
Hæc vult turba mori.*

It should stimulate us, that altho' the paths of preferment be no longer interdicted by the legislature, yet whilst we want that quality which in a government, such as ours, constitutes the sole recommendation, we must embark in these pursuits under the discouragement of partiality and preference, which the possession of political importance produces to our disadvantage.

We learn from the very opposition the value and necessity of our personal exertions; it is vehement, and we are told will be eternal; strong reasons not to abandon our cause to accident, or the casual progress of liberality. There appears at present more reluctance to admit us than at the period of the Convention; and if we suffer our claim to lie dormant for half a century,

ry, in proportion as the monopoly of constitution becomes more valuable, those who hold it, will be more intent on our exclusion. At some period this repugnance must be met with firmness; I can foresee no change of circumstances which will render a future more eligible than the present season; our numbers are not likely to decrease, and our religious sentiments, the pretext of so much aversion, are immutable.

The caution deduced from the present state of France has been so often demonstrated erroneous, that I think it here unnecessary to expatiate on the subject. If gentlemen are permitted to postpone a discussion upon which they desire never to enter, until the world, or even until Europe shall be tranquil: they will find to the end of time, one pretext or other for the adjournment.

If I were entitled to the joint-possession of a tenement, and informed by the occupier that he doubted not the validity of my claim, but indeed a neighbouring concern being on fire, he was so intent, gazing on the conflagration, or taking precautions to guarantee himself from the effects of it, that he could not at present render justice to me; I should reply, give me admittance, that I may protect our common property; but circumstanced as I now am, I have not the power, nor indeed much inclination to assist you.

Our enemies have frequently endeavoured to complicate our proceedings with those of France; our friends too have sometimes imagined that

the success of the popular party in that country should encourage us. The first we all disclaim in common ; the second, (I offer the opinion of an individual,) ought not to produce the smallest effect upon our proceedings, ought not for an instant to animate or retard us. We cannot consider France a model, but merely as a country eligible for emigration. If two or three years ago they had ceased to reform, and settled the nation under a constitution of well controulled monarchy ; it would have been now the asylum of the oppressed ; surrounding governments must have relaxed, or they would have been depopulated, and Liberty would have found its level throughout Europe.

So long as the settlement of France is procrastinated, the events which take place there can produce no effect upon our emancipation ; on the contrary, her freedom tarnished with ferocity, and degenerating in the opinion of many persons, into licentiousness, rather deters moderate men from giving their sanction to popular proceedings.

Whatever may be the issue of the contest, *Despotism is subverted* ; at the conclusion of the war, France will stand in need of population and property. Even if the royalists succeed, there is a revolution in public opinion, which will prevent the possibility of restoring the former detestable domination ; under an impression a republic is an unwieldy, and a dangerous form of government for a large state, and that the endeavour to establish it in France retards the settlement of the country, if I were

to form a wish, it would not be for the perpetuity of the Gallic Commonwealth.

We certainly cannot carry our cause in the teeth of administration; whoever may be the minister of the day must be with us. But it must not therefore be concluded that ministers are to be won by tame cringing, indefinite acquiescence. Without rudeness to the Sovereign power, we can have no difficulty to convince a minister that this numerous body of subjects are extremely material to his interests, and the interests of government. If we have spirit and be unanimous, like the Quakers, Presbyterians, or any other class of men in the nation, he will without difficulty discover the alteration in our situation and sentiments, and he will comply with us.

It is equally true, that administration at present seems to countenance the opposition against us. But this circumstance it is easy to account for. The Catholics are scattered and disunited; if a minister espoused their cause, they could not protect him against the multitude of enemies he should excite. They must arrange themselves into a compact body, attached to their friends, hostile to their enemies, and ready to receive with open arms the man who faces danger in their service. On no other terms can a minister be expected to patronize them. A patriot statesman might generously volunteer to relieve his country: but like Turgot, he would fall a sacrifice to those who have an interest in the abuses.

It may be presumed that the Catholics are in a state of probation. That our powerful adversaries

versaries have undertaken to silence, or to intimidate us. That the minister is therefore neuter, but, if he sees these gentlemen unable to fulfil their contract, that he will consent to the emancipation of the Catholics.

It is natural to suppose, that if assured we were in earnest, the British cabinet would adopt this mode of conduct, for we must otherwise be an impediment to its operations. I put out of the question the possibility that we should take arms, to which I have one solid and unsuperable objection, the impossibility of success. But the administration of the Empire could never undertake any measure of importance, whilst in its rere, is placed the incumbrance of three or four discontented millions, unwilling to assist in case of emergency.

Does not common sense point out that it would be much more desirous to satisfy this host and to attach them to the crown, especially when the boon is not at the expence of the crown itself, but of the Aristocracy, a corps which Kings may dread, but scarcely can esteem ; it is to be observed that the Irish Aristocracy is formed to be peculiarly hateful to the monarch, for it affects a controlling power independant of him.

I do not believe that antient or modern history affords a single instance, in which the supreme power made concessions from benevolence; atleast if there exist such circumstances not exactly before my memory, they are so singular as not to constitute a precedent; it would be equally wise, like the Jews, to rest our hopes upon a miraculous deliverance, as to expect that

any minister will undertake our cause, unless under a conviction that it is expedient. To create this expedience is our duty.

We should not have procured the freedom of our legislature, or extension of our commerce, with so much facility, unless the British minister had consented ; but we never should have obtained that consent if we had expected the operation of his benevolence. The nation demanded its rights on that occasion with unanimity, and the minister yielded ; not because he thought it impossible to subdue the spirit ; but because he felt, as every prudent minister must feel in similar circumstances, that it is politic to retain the people in temper by reasonable concessions, and that the advantages, to be derived from a victory would not constitute an equivalent to the evils by which it is purchased.

Mr. Pitt was not apprehensive that the London shop-keepers would excite an insurrection, when he very reluctantly gave up his favourite shop-tax. But he was aware, that adhering to a measure, in the face of a spirited and persevering body, created a multitude of enemies, with whom it was not prudent to be at variance. The body of the Irish Catholics are entitled from the minister to about ten thousand times the degree of consideration which should be annexed to the London shop-keepers. But we have been hitherto defective in spirit and unanimity.

I enter into this detail, because when one talks of a spirited opposition, it is no uncommon

mon interrogation, do you mean to revolt? I answer, I do not recommend revolt; it is not likely to succeed, and I scarcely think that any political good is worth the purchase of confusion. France has instructed mankind how a Revolution may be brought about, and why it ought not to be attempted.

It is the very essence of a free constitution, and, perhaps, its principal advantage, that it provides expedients for relief, other than by violence. The Irish organization of Society was framed for the purpose of preserving liberty; it is only extreme force which can pervert it to oppression. Still many rights remain which it is impossible to wrest from us. By the temperate and judicious use of them, and of our influence, the remainder will be easily recovered. Having stated on other occasions, how these means may be employed to advantage, I shall not swell this essay by repetition, (see letter to the Secretary of the United Irishmen of Belfast, page 24).

It is not impossible that the parliamentary proprietors would risk a civil war rather than do us justice; at least the conjecture is probable, from the recent threats thrown out by their adherents in the grand juries, and in the circular letter of the corporation of Dublin; a compilation of presumptuous nonsense, worthy an aggregate of lunatics; which I do not hesitate to pronounce, a most useful and fortunate publication for the Irish Catholics, as it exposes, in the clearest manner, the nature of their claims, and the arrogant pretensions of their oppo-

nents. These gentlemen are aware, that their influence must decrease in proportion as that of the nation rises. They know, that neither the constitution now established, nor the freedom of religion, nor the unity of the Empire, could be endangered by restoring to the Catholics the capacity to become electors. But they know that those Roman Catholics, who should acquire suffrage, would become, like the Protestants who possess it, inquisitive and spirited.

That public disbursements must, in that case, be, more than they now are, sacred to public utility.

Let us review the resources for this enterprise if the persons, I allude to, were inclined to undertake it.

Will the Aristocracy itself take the field, with its phalanx of Grand-jurors, Burgeesses and Portreeves, of Commissioners and Dignitaries, of dependant Guagers and expectant Parsons. No, no ; a folly against the pastime of unarmed rustics; military execution where there is no possibility of resistance, or the glorious triumph of escorting a convict to the gibbet will signalize the prowess of these heroes, and constitute the sum of their achievements.

The labouring poor of three provinces are universally Catholic ; the intermediate tenantry who influence the labouring poor are mostly of that persuasion. These men are, of all others, most interested that the capacity for suffrage should be communicated to the Catholics. They will not easily be induced to fight against the extension of their own privileges.

Will the Presbyterian yeomanry of the North take up arms for the courtiers who enjoy pensions wrung from their own hard-earnings, for the parsons who exact tithes, and the landlords, who impose rack-rents ? They too are complainants ; if they unsheathed the sword against their brethren, would they be likely to return it to the scabbard, until they had procured very ample redress, and removed the causes of their dissatisfaction ?

Should that people ever be embodied, tithes boroughs, all the arts and practices of monopoly must inevitably fall before them. Now the errors of administration, which are more dear to the powerful in Ireland than any religion whatsoever, would be not more than remotely affected by complying with the peaceable solicitation of the Catholics ; it is therefore to be presumed, that they would rather by concession avert the greater evil than provoke it.

What shall become of the estates of the great landed proprietors, whilst the tenantry of Ireland is persecuted or in resistance ? and these estates, how much soever impoverished and depopulated, must defray the military force and all contingent expences. Would the advantage be equivalent to this purchase ?

The military force of Ireland, is, I believe, under some circumstances equal to keep the people in subjection ; but let us consider the consequences of suffering that duty to devolve on them.

The troops on our establishment are composed of Scotch or English, mixed with some natives,

tives, in whom an unsettled life and intercourse with strangers have weakened or effaced their local affections ; if they are ever brought on the stage of Irish politics, they will become masters of the theatre. They will certainly follow their officers against the people, but they will follow the same officers at the command of the British minister, against the victorious remnant of the nation. So that by employing these troops against the Catholics, the Keys of the country are laid at the feet of the British minister ; nay, he is made to feel that the Kingdom is at his discretion ; he will use his authority, as every British minister would desire to use it, and re-establish the antient dominion of England. He will do more, he will rivet your chains to all eternity ; taught by experience that a Parliament, altho' for a time it may be debilitated, bears in its bosom the principle of renovation, that if suffered to subsist it will rise as before into rivalship, and subvert as before this darling supremacy. He will extinguish by an union every promise of future vigour, and rob you of your legislature with the same sword, by which he has cut down the pretensions of the Catholics. No more Irish Chancellors, Irish Judges, Irish Commissioners, or Irish Bishops, vanished every reward and every emulation, your national character will sink into debasement ; your nobility be degraded into English squires : your gentry into English boors, and your country into English plantations. Your name be effaced from among nations, and after having glittered

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awhile in the eyes of Europe, the land you cherish become a blank; despised and forgotten, the level sink of ignorance and bigotry.

Such must be the inevitable consequence of introducing a foreign force into the management of our domestic transactions. If it were however possible that an union, fatal to the Irish name and nation could be averted, at least the victorious auxillaries should be gratified with an establishment in the country. But this colony would not, after its victory in the field, be one tenth part so docile as the Catholics, impressed with gratitude for concessions in the Cabinet. This question alone would be decided by the conflict, whether shall the land be tenanted in preference by free Protestants or unenslaved Roman Catholics? The latter I believe would be found more tractable.

The arguments against employing the accustomed standing army of the country, apply yet more forcibly against the propriety of calling in additional aid from England, or the possibility of obtaining it.

It is utterly immaterial to the minister or people of England, whether five hundred or five thousand constituents return two Knights of the Shire to the commons house of Ireland. This point concerns only the Irish candidate, who must desire to be as little as possible, embarrassed by numbers in his canvass; unless it were with a design utterly to subjugate this country in consequence of its divisions, what inducement could prevail on England to undertake

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the expence of equipping an armament against us? The threat of the power of England is an impotent menace; if the sister nation were at any time inclined to embroil herself with this country, she would have contested the monopoly of trade and supremacy of Legislature; either of these objects were important; the one as it secured our dependance, the other as it rendered that dependance valuable. Having at that period declined entering into an hostile conflict with the sister nation; having afterwards when unincumbered by foreign war, declined to recover her jurisdiction by violence on the occasion of the propositions; will any man in his senses assert that she would think of expending her blood and treasure upon a mere domestic regulation, which does not affect her commerce or her glory; the unity of the crowns or welfare of the Empire?

Ireland is valuable to Great Britain, because in time of war we contribute to her strength; because by our absentees we yield revenue; because we supply a mart for her commodities, and assist in the consumption of her manufactures. But it is Ireland industrious and contented, not Ireland indolent and divided, which is important to the sister nation: better for her utterly to renounce the connexion, than to hold it by the tenure of a civil war every century. Every advantage England derives from us would terminate, if our tranquility were interrupted; it would be therefore inexpedient to countenance a derangement in the peace of Ireland, altho' it were ensured that the British

arms should bear unresisted devestation thro' every quarter of the island.

I can only discern a single inducement, which might engage England to intermeddle, in the internal regulations of this country; I have already stated it, an union on her own terms. It is probable she would not desire an union of negotiation, such as might be expected, if the countries, each in full vigour, treated upon terms of equality. It is yet more probable, that an union by conquest would prove acceptable. Without elevating the individuals of the Irish nation to the level of her citizens she then might impose eternal silence on our murmurs. The persons likely to be injured materially by this event, are exactly those who enjoy the emoluments and honours of administration. It would therefore become the interest of England rather to aggrandize the body of the people, and thus to secure them against the future discontents of the upper orders. By this reasoning, I cannot see that the force of England would not be more likely to espouse our quarrel; * we are no longer an object of plunder; if adventurers were to engage, lured

* It must appear to every observer, that any advantage derived by England from the connexion arises, not from the men of consequence, but from the people; (that is the great dissenting bodies) that if the latter losing temper refused to enlist or consume, the connexion would become rather an inconvenience than a benefit to Britain! what is the policy, and, of course, what would be the conduct of the sister Kingdom on this occasion does not admit of a moment's hesitation. For the hint, which conducted me into this reasoning on the probable conduct of Great Britain, I am indebted to a very excellent pamphlet, "Political Arithmetic," by James Laffan, Esq.

by the hope of proscription, the possessions of the church of England would furnish more temptation.

Reflection is a prominent feature in the English character; our cause is already become a topic of discussion; every eminent literary character in England is our advocate. The nation exercises over its ministers an inquisitorial jurisdiction; men in station must attend to public opinion, and watch its dictates. If we demand with unassuming firmness, and temperate determination, not the indulgence of political caprice, but those identical rights, of which every Briton holds the possession invaluable: If we appear to our fellow subjects desirous to preserve inviolate the connection of the associated kingdoms, rivalling them in loyalty, and desirous to imitate them in liberty, they will naturally ask, what advantage they should derive from an expensive conflict with a nation, which it is their interest to preserve, and of which the ruin would be perceived in every branch of their trade and manufactures?

Scotland, at the close of the last century, was somewhat circumstanced with regard to religion, as Ireland is now: the upper ranks adhered to the church of England; Presbyterianism was the religion of the people. Under the Stuarts they experienced a fierce, rigorous, and unabated persecution; King William transferred the establishment from the persecutors to the persecuted: the people embarked in the same bottom with government, and holding the possession of their favourite object by the same tenure, which secured to the

the sovereign his throne, upheld the new settlement with great pertinacity against the nobility and gentry, who were never, to the present reign, attached to the reigning family.

Moreover the absentees constitute an eternal hostage for the conduct of Great Britain; these persons have little or no interest in the Protestant ascendancy; if the Roman Catholics emigrate in disgust, they will want tenants; if there is any commotion, they are obnoxious to every party, and their properties would most indubitably suffer; they possess immense influence in the sister Kingdom, and will certainly, upon all occasions, exert that influence to prevent the minister from making any rash attempt on Ireland. Justice will, indeed, rather be suffered to take its course than any violent measures adopted, for if ever more the sword be drawn among us, which ever party may prevail, the Aristocracy perishes. It would fall, if after a victory, English or North Country colonies were to be planted in the Catholic provinces, these persons, with arms in their hands, would not prove alike obedient, as the present Catholics when completely emancipated. Thus there appear consequences, which defend a people from injustice, without on their part a single effort of resistance. Thus by the wise dispensation of providence, all the orders of Society are so admirably adjusted, that oppressive measures, adopted with regard to any description of citizens, cannot fail to involve the aggressors in destruction.

The enemies of the Catholics seem inclined to play a desperate game ; I trust it is only appearance, for the leading men of the Kingdom, those, of whom the influence is natural, not spurious, and who must sway in this instance, would certainly suffer more by a year of commotion, than they possibly could profit in half a century by this nonsensical ascendancy. It has been attempted to impute seditious and sanguinary designs to the Catholics, of which a single proof, cannot be alledged, and which on the contrary, are repugnant to every evidence. The authors of such idle tales are perhaps not aware, that whilst they only design to intimidate and divide us by an electioneering manœuvre, they materially endanger the credit of this commercial country ; an injury more serious, than if their ascendancy had never existed, or that their *lives and fortunes* had perished by an earthquake. It is possible the same persons may endeavour to inflame the indigent Catholics, and to affix the charge of revolt upon the easy and opulent ; these descriptions, it will without doubt, be impossible to irritate.

But it becomes necessary to inculcate to every order of our communion, the propriety of frustrating this design, by a most passive acquiescence ; warm measures alone can retard our emancipation ; on the least indication of violence to be commenced by our party, all the moderate and powerful would desert the enterprize, and on these rests our principal reliance. England would be induced to interfere in the cause of good government ; united, we could

could not cope with the strength of the Empire ; divided, those who resorted to extremities would perish, the remainder be reduced to a new and more severe subjection.

I conclude, That, so long as the Irish Catholics, not seeking to innovate on the British constitution, only petition to be made partakers of its advantages. So long as they demean themselves dutifully to the crown, and cultivate the mutual prosperity of the associated Kingdoms.

So long as, abstaining from intemperance they confine themselves to the means of application and redress, which are suggested or permitted by the constitution, they need entertain no apprehension of violence, external, or domestic.

2dly, That it is not the advantage of Great Britain to encourage commotion in this Kingdom. On the contrary, that it is very much her interest to prevent it.

3dly, That the adversaries of the Catholics have not the means to attack them.

4thly, That if they had, it is not their interest to employ them.

5thly, That any interruption of the public peace on the part of the Catholics, or any act which may be construed into hostility against our happy constitution, alienating their best friends, and justifying their fiercest enemies must frustrate, or at least, retard their emancipation.

I can not dismiss the subject, without repeating, that on the side of the Catholics there is not the least indication of evil designs, or even

even of ill-temper. The most irrefragable evidence, that three millions and an half are not seditious, is, that the charge is banded about the country without the least personal inconvenience to its authors. The ridicule of the scene will be complete, when we cast our eyes around us, and observe this formidable host of Papists, industriously and peaceably occupied at the plough and the counter; and the gentlemen who has been so solemnly denounced by this inconsiderate squirocracy, and whom strangers might suppose the Pascal Paoli of Ireland, calmly engaged in his accustomed pursuits on Change and in the City. No person would compare, for an instant, the gallant nobility of old France with the gentlemen who constitute the Irish Grand Juries; yet in all its pride of arrogance, the landed French interest would not have hauled before the public in this harsh and undignified manner, a commercial character of eminence.

I have thus far argued an extreme case, and entered into a train of reasoning, which should never have occurred to me, if I had not observed a sort of crusade preached against the Catholics, and authorized by the signatures of different individuals, who stile themselves Grand Jurors, Aldermen of Skinners Alley, Officers of Corporations, &c. &c. It is asserted in the formula of covenant signed by these associators, that the subscribing parties, will resist our claim at the hazard of their lives and fortunes. By this I am led to suppose that they are willing to endanger their lives, and ours, of consequence,

quence, in order to prevent any Catholic from voting for his representatives. I do by no means credit the assertion ; and if the gentlemen concerned will submit to the trouble of reading these pages, they will find that the execution of their threat is neither quite so safe or easy as they imagine.

A matter of internal regulation, proposed to the Catholics and regarding only that portion of the Irish people, has set these gentlemen in commotion. It appears to have been in contemplation to depute agents from the respective counties, for the purpose of submitting to Parliament, or to his majesty, the unambiguous sense of the Irish Catholics on the subject of their grievances. If it can be proved that the suspension of political rights, accompanied by so many collateral privations, do not constitute an hardship; or, if the Catholics admit, that being sensible of the evils, they think, that the burden is just and ought to be acquiesced in, I am ready to give up the propriety of this delegation. As both the one and the other are admitted universally to be false, and that this body have that general desire to be redressed which is natural to all rational beings, they must expound their hopes and wishes either by agents or principals ; that is, either by the promiscuous assemblage of multitudes, like the ancient Germans ; or by representatives duly authorised, like the progeny of these Germans, when in a state of civilization. I conceive that there is in the latter method less of hostility, and more of good order ; and I shall continue

to

to think so, until our officious advisers shall suggest some other mode less exceptionable.

It is strange how whimsically inconsistent are these gentlemen, and how blinded by the conceit of their legal self-importance. If the Roman Catholics casually use, "must," for "may," or "will," for "shall," if every word is not arranged with more than grammatical precision, an alarm runs from Derry to Dingle, every lengthened visage announces revolt; every angry gesture proclaims insolence.

But twenty-three gentlemen, who thinking perhaps that the character of a Grand Juror, is like Melchisedeck's Priesthood, indelible; and that every future act of their lives is legalized, because they have received for two or three days, a commission to make presentments, never suspect that it is intimidation or indecency, to threaten his Majesty's good subjects, that if they persevere with a probability of success in a pursuit, at once legal, justifiable, and commendable, they shall be exposed to the hazard of having their throats cut.

They assert, that the Sub-committee of Catholics is not recognized by the constitution; pray what constitution recognizes twenty-three men, who having been nominated for a specific purpose, to transact the county business, instead of peaceably dispersing, as was their duty, when the object of their appointment had been fulfilled, perhaps during the festivity of the evening, lay their hands upon their swords, and dictate a menace of murder against their unoffending fellow citizens? I recommend it strenuously

strenuously to the consideration of those Roman Catholics, who intend to persevere in applying for the privilege of suffrage, whether it would not be adviseable to swear the peace against every one of those Gentlemen, who, during the ensuing winter, shall visit the metropolis.

When in the Convention, it was proposed to extend the advantages of Representation to the Catholics, a reply echoed from every quarter, (I have the minutes of that meeting before me) that the sense of the Catholics not having been expressed on the subject, they could not be admitted into consideration. Now I must suppose that those, who made the remark designed to express, that it would have been adviseable for the Catholics to have had, at that time, in the metropolis, an assemblage of the men of sense and weight of their party, collected from the different parts of the nation, who being fully instructed in the sentiments of their respective neighbours, might treat in their names, and deliver the extent of their expectations and pretensions.

At that period a message was delivered in the name of Lord Kenmare, which was contradicted by the resolution of a meeting at which Sir Patrick Bellew presided. A similar controversy occurred during the last winter, between two bodies of Roman Catholics, each claiming to speak the sentiments of the people of their persuasion. As such altercations are likely to continue to the end of time, common sense calls upon us to terminate the

difference by establishing an œcuménical tribunal of which the decisions shall be supreme, decisive and satisfactory.

It is not a novelty in this Kingdom, that its Catholic inhabitants should be extra constitutionally represented. As to the fact of representation, the *imperium in imperio*, between one and one thousand the essence is unaltered. It is alike a violation of legal forms, whether the individual Viscount Kenmare, or two hundred Gentlemen députed from the counties and commercial cities, undertake to deliver the sense of this scattered body. Ministers themselves have encouraged the erection of a subordinate principality, and appeared desirous to protect my Lord Kenmare's jurisdiction; we only attempt at present to improve the government they recognized, and to render it more suitable to our necessities. The former constitution was, I presume, deemed more convenient for the purposes to which the Irish Catholics were destined. Caligula thought similarly of the Roman people; he imagined that beneath one head, they would have been more obnoxious to his caprices.

Are the ministers of the Crown aware of the delicate ground upon which they stand, whilst the Irish Catholics are compressed within the span of any individual? Three millions of aggrieved complainants taught to look to a single hand for consolation and protection! The personal character of the Nobleman, we allude to, might be relied on; but at some period he must have a successor, and if a bustling man of

rank

rank should occupy the same situation, the government of the country could only be conducted by his sufferance. It is moreover a dominion of opinion, and of course must be elective. May not persons of distinction conform to our religion for the mere purpose of obtaining this pre-eminence? Let any reflecting man deliberate on these circumstances, and answer, does he think it a detriment to Ireland, that its Roman Catholic inhabitants, being under a necessity to vest the supreme direction of their affairs in some hands, should rather organize themselves on the plan of a representative government, than of a monarchy?

That we should aggregate is the course of human nature, and might have been foreseen when these statutes were enacted. Even in savage life, men are collected by common wants, and pressed into coalition by common inconveniences. The line, which separated us from the constitution, traced out the ground for this distinct confederacy. If the Catholics of Ireland have grievances of which they are sensible, unless a plague line be established thro' the country, assuredly they will communicate.

We have no intercourse with bodies constituted by authority, Parliament may enjoin obedience, it cannot expound our wishes; yet our sentiments are not immaterial; when couched in the language of address, even the expression of them is solicited. The law of the land excluding us from its free constitution, does not provide, nor does the jealousy

of our country permit, that intercourse of protection, and dependance which might be supposed to endear the subject to his arbitrary sovereign. Thus abandoned at every side, and reduced to a state of nature, is it wonderful that we endeavour to supply the deficiency ? You refuse us admittance to your comfortable edifice ; can you envy us the shed, we erect for our accommodation ?

Probably from like motives of expediency, altho' with them the necessity is not equally urgent, every other sect in this Kingdom has established general stated meetings ; the Presbyterians have the synod of Ulster, the Quakers their provincial and national meetings ; we hear constantly of the proceedings of these bodies, yet I know not that there exists an act of Parliament, which incorporates the persons who compose them, or in the language of the different Grand Juries, that the constitution recognises them.

I never read a law book in my life ; I can deliver therefore but the simple dictates of reason operating in a plain understanding. It appears to me that a free constitution recognizes in the first instance all the members of the community, and establishes in them a right to observe accurately the proceedings of the legislative body ; if any individual or any aggregate of individuals be touched thereby, it authorizes them, not indeed to resist, but to petition, remonstrate and to criticise with decency. Where many are concerned they must come together to transact their common business ; the meeting

meeting must be peaceable ; those things which the law prohibits must not be within the object of it, else the parties will be punished, for the violation of law, not for the meeting.

I conceive this to be the fact, because in aid of the evidence of my reason, I have the evidence of my senses ; this country is filled with meetings and associations, which if to associate were criminal could not possibly be tolerated.

I know not that any specific law embodied the different Volunteer corps, of which I suppose all those were members who now censure this proceeding. It will be said that these corps were sanctioned by the thanks of either legislative body ; but these thanks, if bestowed upon delinquents, only serve to convict the lords and commons of having prostituted the sacred name of either house for the purpose of countenancing the delinquency.

Under what statute were held the conventions, to which many of those who censure the formation of a Catholic committee sent delegates, and in which many of them sat as representatives ? under what protecting statute are held all the reform Societies, and Whig Clubs in every part of either Kingdom ?

The gentlemen, who have signed these resolutions, seem to imagine, that in a free state, no measure should be entertained unless Parliament shall previously have prepared the project, and enjoined it. I conceive this to be the reverse of reality. The citizen of a free state is only restrained in his actions by known and positive law, and is authorized to do every act

which

which does not happen by that law to be specifically prohibited. And this fact is exemplified in their own conduct; for altho' it is somewhat more than indecorous to endeavour to awe the legislature by anticipating its judgment; and altho' it wears the aspect of menace to proclaim, that they will fly to arms, if the wisdom of Parliament should happen to outweigh their sentiments; yet have they committed all these acts, and stand accountable to their country, for the precedent of previously deciding a question, on which Parliament alone is competent to pronounce, and for the attempt to intimidate, and the attempt to overawe the legislative body*.

If

* I do not wish that vindicating the propriety of a delegation of agents to conduct the affairs of the Catholics, I should be construed to justify the items of the plan proposed by the sub-committee. This, I conceive, to have been a most injudicious means of effecting a good purpose; not indeed as has been represented, containing libel or false inflammatory matter, but consisting of many weak points, which, as a member of the body, for whose use it was promulgated, I think reprehensible; the sense of the Catholics might have been as well, possibly better collected, in a manner less agitating and less offensive. In the letter there was rather too much detail, in the project too much machinery; and at the view I have of the business, I cannot but think it unwise, in these gentlemen, to have sent the name of their chairman, like a rattle snake, through the country, proclaiming alarm and giving notice to counteract their measures. The complication of extraneous matter with our question which has appeared on this occasion, has indisposed many, otherwise not averse to the Catholic emancipation.

Another material indiscretion appears to me to have been the assertion of a communication "from authority;" I do believe by this expression no more was meant to be conveyed than the surmise of intelligent individuals. If there had been such communication, to reveal it was weak and criminal; if not,

If our union gives alarm the remedy is not remote; the aggregation may be dissolved; it may be torn up by the roots, and the very principle of it effaced for ever, by redressing that grievance, to which it points, and which produces it. But where such valid grounds of complaint exist, factious can never be the designation of the complainants.

The recognised Sovereign power of the country is intitled to extreme deference. Its duties and province should be kept sacred from intrusion. We owe this to the good of society, the order and tranquillity of the state we live in. The legislative body should not be intemperately assailed; but those who would prevent us from concerting measures for our application, seem to insinuate that it should not be approached on any condition. The Catholic Delegation, Committee, or whatever name it may bear, can have no hope of success, or the members who compose it of importance in the nation, but from the support of their party. When it shall travel beyond the object

not, it was foolish to affect it. But this is not the only instance of play-house whisper advice given by these gentlemen of the sub-committee of the Catholics of Ireland. On one or two occasions before, they circulated indiscriminately through the kingdom, printed instructions for private conduct. They may be excellent men, and very zealous politicians, but they can scarcely be accused of conspiracy.

Having here and in another place alluded to Mr. Byrne, justice obliges me to declare that thro' the entire Roman Catholic business his conduct has been most meritorious, his services great, that he does not appear to me to have complicated his views, and that those who have a more hereditary claim upon the notice of the Catholic party, should blush at his superior spirit and extirions.

of its mission, enter into any measures but those, which are necessary for obtaining a tranquil emancipation, thro' the ordinary channels of the constitution, or use any other language than that of calm entreaty and modest expostulation, it will fall in its own party. Every sensible Catholic will join with every Protestant in censure. But until there shall be a manifestation of some such design, it is the interest and the duty of the Irish Catholics, to, make a joint stock of their influence, and intrust it for short periods to those among themselves, who shall seem most likely to wield it, with moderation and with efficacy. Such persons, I am confident, will be found among the agents appointed to conduct the Catholic application, of the ensuing session. I am obliged reluctantly to express what the entire nation must perceive, that the few gentlemen of the metropolis, who have hitherto assumed the direction of this business, stand in need of coadjutors. I question their prudence, not their zeal; not their intentions, but their reflection, foresight, and political sagacity. It is time the cause of a great people should assume the appearance of system. For the last ten months, it has fluctuated before the public, in the hands of unskilful managers, without even the dignity of steadiness, advancing and retreating, asserting and retracting with the giddiness of school boys, and the random of a game of nine pins.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

THIS consideration ought to decide the Roman Catholics of the Kingdom at large to stand forward in their own cause. If zeal and activity could effectually promote their interests, they might limit the agency of their business to the metropolis, or rather to that part of the metropolis, which has hitherto appeared in it. But wisdom is necessary to aid, to regulate, and to conduct these qualities ; zeal may otherwise prove a dangerous spark thrown among a combustible people, and activity the fatal current that fans it.

I reject with greater readiness the sole and unrestrained exertion of these qualities, because they are more calculated to create tumult than to reach the question, at least in that calm manner, which the majority of men at ease will alone think eligible ; and because from some reflection on the subject, I am fully convinced that we are competent to attain our object, by those constitutional means, which every party will approve of.

It was formerly usual with the Catholics to accept of the services of individuals, or private Societies, bringing the great body as little as possible before the public. Very obvious reasons induced the gentlemen, who wish to ap-

pear leaders in the business, to deviate about ten months back from this wise and dignified policy. Since that time the repetition of resolutions, addresses, justifications, circular letters, &c. have given to the representative body of the Catholic people the air of a little squibbing Club. I would suggest it, as one of the first improvements, to take place *in that representative organ*, that it should imitate not a little the former majestic reserve to be interrupted only on occasions of solemn import. It is the wish of all concerned to improve, not to convulse the country. Let those who are anxious for the appearance of spirit, look upon the awful aggregation of three millions. Let them reflect, that the tread of an Elephant is more formidable than an angry Cat in the most complete display of its vigour. I should not decline an useful measure because it gave umbrage; but I should chearfully relinquish those which are little more than indifferent; and, if a nearly equal effect could be produced, even the most material should be managed without offending. The circumstances of this country are now essentially altered; twelve months ago a temperate display of spirit was useful, it has appeared. It should be our present policy, to guide our cause with dexterous moderation to its haven, steering equally clear of timid acquiescence, and a propensity to overact the patriot character.

We have little to expect from the philosophy of the question operating on the great. Their interest in the present state of things is too personal. As well might the

negro

negro cause be pleaded before an assembly of Jamaica planters. The West-Indian must confess his monopoly unjust: but he will tell you that he has in it a certain property, which he will retain to the last moment. The less candid would perhaps endeavour to colour their usurpation by some such sophism as the Protestant ascendancy. The equity of our cause will produce more effect upon the middle ranks of Protestants. This description of our fellow citizens, altho' the greater part of them be for the moment under the influence of delusion, are our natural allies. It is our interest on all occasions to urge the discussion. Even our determined enemies expect from us this conduct. Perseverance in argument, with the means of influence, resulting from a large over-proportion of the producing property of the land, and no inconsiderable share in the capital will induce our countrymen to revise their prejudices. Reflection will make us proselytes.

The declarations of this summer do not induce me to retract my prediction that the period of our emancipation is not far distant. These are the last efforts of expiring bigotry. A large majority of the French notables, a body, of which the weight and wisdom can suffer no parallel with the Irish grand juries, resolved in favor of letters de cachet, but a few months before the overthrow of the Despotism, by which that tyrannical usage was supported. The object of our requisition is too just and reasonable to be withheld, if we urge it firm, moderate

and united ; it may be endeavoured for some time to baffle or deter us ; and a war of words will probably be continued. But if our perseverance survive the trial of one or two years, no government in its senses will permit this kind of separate jurisdiction to be confirmed within its district. This, I conceive, to be one of the resources of our calm emancipation, and of course one of the strongest motives to combine under a directing council, and to act in unison. Force could not certainly disperse the coalition, but before conciliation it would effectually melt away.

Altho' the measures of the Catholics be concerted in common ; it occurs to me at this moment, and I throw it out merely for consideration, that it would be an useful sacrifice to the harmony of the country, if their committee did not appear in many public acts. It may suggest to its principals. I have little doubt that the application of the Catholics would be more correct, more constitutional, and more weighty, if it came from the freeholders of that communion in the respective counties praying to be relieved from the suspension of their elective franchise. Thus the sense of the nation would be fully conveyed, and in a form the most unexceptionable, and it would be found much more difficult to treat with indifference the petition of the respectable men of each county in the kingdom, than of a single city.

If the opposition to us proceeded from the Government of the country, the representation

tion of the commercial body of the metropolis might be very much relied on. But it rather arises from those, who possess local importance in the respective counties and it would, therefore, be useful to encourage a spirit of activity, and vigilance in the principal Catholics of these places. For altho' the opponents, I allude to, may treat with neglect, a citizen of Dublin of great respectability with whom they have no acquaintance, and who can neither injure or promote their electioneering schemes ; they will not equally overlook a provincial of less national, but more relative consequence, and observing many such persons in each district intent on the pursuit, each will probably think it his interest to relax the opposition.

From these considerations it was projected during the last session of parliament that the Catholics of the counties should petition, and some had already disposed themselves to do so, but the design was interrupted by gentlemen of the metropolis, who did not consider the measure in the same strong light of expediency ; or who were desirous to limit the number of persons who might attract public attention.

So long as the natural leaders of the Catholics appear even luke-warm, many who from connexion or other circumstances could not well oppose the unanimous voice of the body, will under pretext of disunion vote against the majority. It was unlucky that some among the upper classes of our persuasion were not prepared for the measures of last winter, I cannot say that they have had no reason to complain since that event.

It may be expected that some remarks should have been offered on the assertion that if the Catholics of Ireland were included among its citizens, the interests of the house of Hanover and of Great Britain, would be endangered. If the most determined enemy to both were desirous to render the connection and the crown hideous and hateful in Ireland, he would have gone to work like the gentlemen of Louth, and some other places; and told the people that these were the obstacles to their happiness. The Roman Catholics of the principal commercial cities, have manifested their attachment to both by a conduct directly contrary. They have flatly denied the truth of the position ; they have informed the less instructed part of their Society, that it was only calculated for the purpose of intimidation, and thrown the *onus probandi* upon its authors. There let it rest; as the trick has failed; nay, has had an effect the reverse of what was intended ; it will only procure for the contrivers, the ridicule of disappointment, and the disapprobation, no matter how severe, of their own party. Had it not been for these very proceedings, the spirit of the Catholics would not have risen to its present degree of animation. But the denunciation of eternal slavery, and the attack upon their right of petition have excited even those, who before were lukewarm.

The persons who have distinguished themselves against the Catholics have so ordered things, that, what a few months back was the anxious wish of a few, has now become the cause

cause of an entire people. There is, I believe, scarcely a peasant in Ireland, who has not been attracted by the late charges and recriminations, and who does not expect speedily to receive a real or imaginary amelioration of his condition.

What lately would have been humanity, is now become wisdom, and may in the course of things, ere long, prove necessity.

The Grand Juries have done exactly what the warmest friend to our cause could have wished ; they have scattered the enthusiasm of emancipation thro' every county of the Kingdom ; if they had continued calm it would have, probably, been confined to Dublin ; and this would not for some time amount to any important effect ; eventually it would, for an expensive monopoly, limited to a few, and to which all contribute, is so extremely absurd, that it cannot long survive even the establishment of Sunday schools, which teach the lower order to write their names. In the nature of things they must in a little time be free.

Some sophistry has been employed of late to persuade the Catholics that the enjoyment of the elective franchise would not be productive of advantage to them. If it be useless, why is it at all preserved? If profitable, why not universally communicated?

The addition of the collection of the revenue to the definition of Protestant ascendancy completes the burlesque, and denotes that the emoluments of government, not the advantage of the country, is the object of its supporters. The national utility of this ascendancy, remains, however,

however, still to be proved ; I do not recollect that this has in the entire controversy been attempted. If there is no possibility of reconciling it with the union of the people of Ireland, and the equal distribution of franchises among them, the assent of every thinking man will be precarious.

I don't know what may be the advantage accruing to Ireland, from Protestant ascendency ; but I think reason and experience alike prove, that to remove the discontents of the people, would improve public credit, and animate industry. That of course every man in Ireland who possesses property would be a gainer by the event.

If it be alledged that the discontents have been of late created by individuals, and are not of permanent duration, I deny the fact ; individuals may perhaps have taught the Catholics to avow their sentiments more freely ; but no exertions could have produced that sensibility to grievance, who has been manifested. A mass of talents, as great as ever existed at one period in the world, has for many years past been ineffectually played off upon the people of England ; no degree of ferment has been excited equal to that which has arisen in Ireland during the last twelve months.

If I were asked how far this ferment would conduct ; it is impossible to answer, but very easy to conjecture ; when the bonds of society are suffered to be broken, popular excess may be extravagant. Whilst social order subsists, men usually murmur until their wants are in equilibrium

equilibrium with their enjoyments. In the confiscation of church property, individuals would find little advantage ; if the hierarchy bottoms itself upon national grievances, it is possible that at some period or other a rude assault might involve what is good, and what is bad, the cause and the effect, in a common overthrow ; if it does not identify itself with these grievances, it can only fall by the neglect or desertion of its own proselytes. The inconvenience will not be of magnitude sufficient to induce a conspiracy of the different dissenting bodies, and to provoke an attack in which they should risk their personal safety and private happiness against the ecclesiastical property and honours.

The oath of allegiance was the first fatal blow levelled against the popery laws in this country. In order to thwart the Roman Catholics, who were supposed still to retain some lingering affection for the house of Stuart, it was made compulsory on them to swear that the Stuart family "had no right, and ought to have no right to the crown of these realms;" two propositions which could never be assented to by any man, who had not clearly ascertained in his own mind, *the Sovereignty of the people and their right to cashier their Governors.* So that the Irish Catholics have been forced by their rulers to become *sworn Whigs and Revolutionists* in the most extensive import of either term. Quere to the gentlemen who framed that oath ; Do they think that it was material to them, to have purchased a renunciation of this drooping claim

upon such conditions? after having thus forced us to become speculative politicians, it is supposed that we shall acquiesce in a government not of King, Nobles, or uniformly of gentlemen, but of forty shilling freeholders, and venal freemen, the common council of Dublin, the guild of St. Loy, and Aldermen of Skinners Alley.—The primary revolution of France was well said to have been the conflict of every principle against every error. But in the proceedings relative to the Irish Catholics, all the errors and principles have been in collision each against the other.

If ever the laws of subordination be superseded in Ireland, a train of events will ensue, exactly similar to those of France, and for the same reason, the upper ranks lean too heavily upon the lower: It would be different in England, the commonalty of that country are not excluded from the comforts of life, they would of course be sufferers by the suspension of the social order. I do not urge this remark to the extreme of which it is susceptible.

These observations may probably appear free to those, who consider the Roman Catholics a vassal and dependant people. I conceive that from nature, and the constitution, we are entitled to all rights whatever; but that the exercise of part of these rights is accidentally suspended. Writing hastily without the hope of fame, and merely limited in my view to public benefit, I have not been very fastidious in my choice of expressions; I offer this apology alone to literary criticism.

AS it is probable that I shall not again trouble the public on this subject, I cannot dismiss it finally, without apologizing for the too frequent intrusion of a very private name into a public question. It could not communicate additional weight to the arguments I advanced; and it may, perhaps, have conveyed an impression of arrogance.

An accidental circumstance unlooked for, indeed reluctantly acquiesced in, originally brought forward my signature. I have since continued it to the various trifles I have written on the subject. In a cause so immense, which combines so many of passions and prejudices extremely diversified publications might appear, in which I should not willingly be implicated. Such I have seen, from indiscreet adherents, gross, personal, and unworthy; to which the advocates of justice ought never have descended. I follow in this conduct the example of the man, who first brought the question of unqualified Catholic suffrage before the public; who excluded from the senate, in which discernment or gratitude ought still to have detained him, has not hesitated on a less dignified theatre to become our champion. This is but a small portion of the applause to which Mr. Jones is entitled.

These

These essays, insignificant, if they be estimated by intrinsic merit; great, if the intention could communicate value, I dedicate to the Irish Catholics. May they receive from the Protestant people and legislature, enlightened to the true interest of their country, that substantial and unqualified redress, which only it becomes them to ask, and their brethren to communicate. General concord and prosperity must be the consequence. If I have in the humblest manner contributed to promote their interest, I am rewarded; if they think so, my most sanguine wish is gratified.

F I N I S.